

The Practical Endgame Bible

**Guidelines for the
Fundamentals
of the Endgame**

Boroljub Zlatanovic

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Boroljub Zlatanovic

Thinkers Publishing 2023



*Thanks to my lovely wife Marijana
for her wholehearted support*

Key to Symbols

!	a good move
?	a weak move
!!	an excellent move
??	a blunder
!?	an interesting move
?!	a dubious move
□	only move
N	novelty
⊙	lead in development
⊙	zugzwang
=	equality
∞	unclear position
∞	with compensation for the sacrificed material
±	White stands slightly better
∓	Black stands slightly better
±	White has a serious advantage
∓	Black has a serious advantage
+−	White has a decisive advantage
−+	Black has a decisive advantage
→	with an attack
↑	with initiative
↔	with counterplay
Δ	with the idea of
▷	better is
≤	worse is
+	check
#	mate

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Foreword

In his new book Boroljub Zlatanovic is reviewing a variety of endgame strategies. The various moves (good and bad), critical moments, future strategy for both sides are well explained and emphasized by the author. It includes topics such as "The Center", "Exchanging Pieces", "The Active King", and "Activity and Harmony". I really like that the book is focused on human thinking and explanations and not just on plain computer analysis. The book is great for starting and professional players alike.

Kiril Georgiev, 2022

Preface

It is a well-known fact that endgames are the basis of chess. Simply, you must know endgames, for instance to be able to build a good plan in the middlegame (and even in the opening if you are a true master). Good opening theory knowledge and the decision-making process and planning in the middlegame would just not be enough if you do not know how to convert in the endgame. This is why all serious chess education from its beginning must start with the endgame. Of course, one starts with trivial and simple endgames, to be later upgraded with typical ones. However, after reaching a certain level it is necessary to investigate endgames much more deeply – to pay attention to more universal and complex elements, ideas and principles. Not surprisingly some universal principles (such as activity, harmony, controlling the open file etc.) are valid not only in the middlegame but they still keep an important role in the endgame!

There are many books devoted to basic endgames, even from the Middle Ages. Principles of typical endgames (such as keeping the rook behind a passed pawn, not setting pawns on the same colored squares as your bishop's, distant pawns being more dangerous than central ones etc.) are well known too. But what about "complex endgames"? I have in mind endgames with at least two pieces on each side; well I don't find them often nor sufficiently well-explained in the past! It is exactly this fact (together with my passion and great endgame experience) that has motivated me to write this book (many friends simply call me "*Endgame Wizard*").

Over two decades of working as a coach has confirmed my opinion that endgames are the biggest problem for young players. Today, in the computer era with a lot of information easily provided, youngsters all over the world rather play blitz, or solve some tactical puzzles in a manner that is "the faster the better" (or even spend time on some other chess disciplines). All of this neglects the basis of chess – the importance of endgames! It is not uncommon that everyday you can be witness to some strange endgame misunderstanding, even at the top level.

This is why I consider some of my favorite endgame books based on logic as the best I've ever read – I learned the endgame from some of the best endgame players and authors. And this is why I want to fill that gap in chess literature and to share my devotion, ideas, principles, opinions with you! I hope you will enjoy this material and I am pretty sure you will broaden your endgame horizons.

The material is separated into 15 chapters that I found essential to cover all the ideas that I had in mind. Logically, I started with more important principles (like the center and activity of the king) which will be widely used later in the book as well. The most specific principles are analyzed at the end. So, for this reason I suggest that you should not skip examples.

Finally, I would be grateful if you would deliver all your opinions, criticisms, suggestions to my mail borzlat@gmail.com. Enjoy and welcome!

Boroljub Zlatanovic, November 2022



The Center

The center is considered to be the ultimate principle of chess in the middlegame. This is also the case in the opening, because we must fight for the center as quickly as possible. Furthermore a series of exchanges in the middlegame will not affect at all the center's importance!

Moreover, the center remains a leading chess principle in the endgame. Indeed, the presence of empty space in the center of the board (this is a usual situation in endgames) would simply reinforce the importance of centralization.

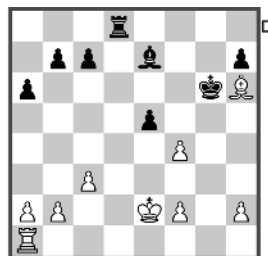
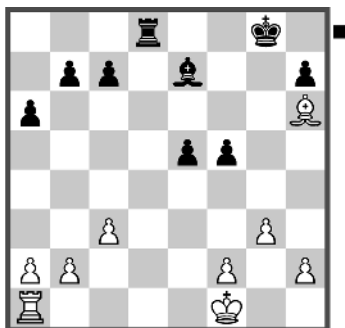


Game 1

♙ Znosko Borovsky, Eugene
♚ Alekhine, Alexander
♁ Paris 1933

White instinctively moves the bishop back to base. However, of course, it was safe on h6. It was better instead to play 21. ♖e2.

20. ♔e2 f4 21. gxf4 ♔g6



Position after: 21... ♔g6

Our first (and in general, the most important) topic starts with a classic and relatively simple example. Alekhine's play in this endgame produces a strong impression. First, Black activates the king.

19... ♗f7 20. ♙e3

This would give nothing to Black after the following. 22. ♙g5 ♙xg5 23. fxg5 ♗xg5 24. ♗g1+ White even has a small advantage.

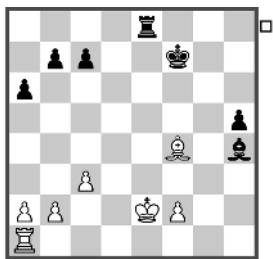
20... h5!

He who stands better in the center can play on the flanks! Although this is more

a psychological rather than a truly dangerous approach, it is in any case logical. Black wants to put annoying pressure after ...h4. Usually the logical response with gxh4 creating an outside passed pawn would be simply bad because the black central pawn armada would dangerously constrict White's army.

21. ♔e2

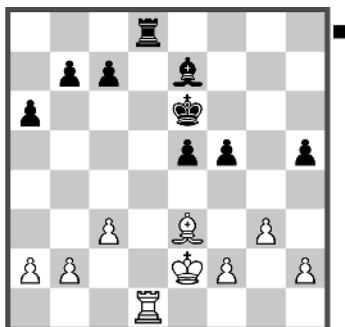
21. h4 f4 22. gxh4 exf4 23. ♖xf4 ♗xh4
24. ♔e2 ♖e8+



Position after: 24... ♖e8+

25. ♔f3 ♗d8 26. ♖h1 h4

21... ♔e6 22. ♖d1



Position after: 22. ♖d1

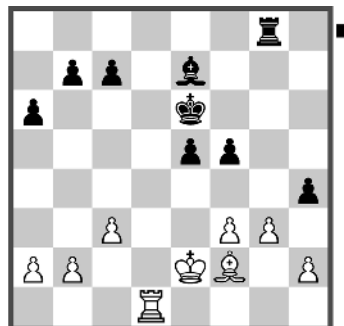
22... ♖g8

22... ♖xd1 This engine move with the idea to advance ...c5-c4 and fix the white pawns on the bishop's color is not good enough because after 23. ♔xd1 ♗d5 24. f3 White should hold without problems. In any case, Black can trade rooks at any moment, so why trade the more active rook for its counterpart?

23. f3 h4

An unpleasant contact.

24. ♗f2



Position after: 24. ♗f2

An interesting moment. Since White should not capture on h4 Black should not hurry. It would have been more appropriate to start with activities on the other side.

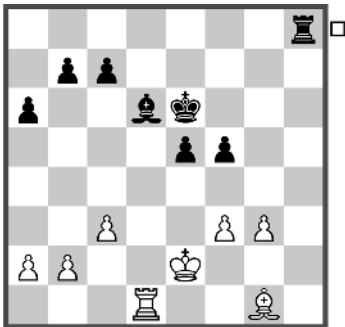
24... hxg3?!

24... b5 Further expanding on the queenside would have been more logical. Control of the center would give Black solid chances for play on both flanks.

25. hxg3 ♖h8

Black has the h-file but there is nothing to achieve if White plays precisely.

26. ♗g1 ♗d6



Position after: 26... ♗d6

A small improvement. The bishop closes the d-file and keeps an eye on the potential target g3.

27. ♔f1?!

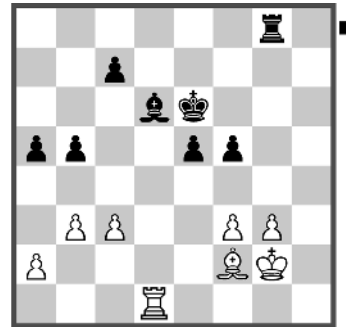
White switches to defense.

27. a4 This would have been a better choice. Now Black's expansion on the queenside would result in trading some pawns – a good strategy for the side playing for a draw. Also, White would then have the a-file for his rook.

27... ♖g8 28. ♗f2 b5!

White has missed the moment for a4 and Black gains space.

29. b3 a5 30. ♔g2



Position after: 30. ♔g2

30. a4?? This leads to disaster after the following. 30... bxa4 31. bxa4 ♖b8

30... a4

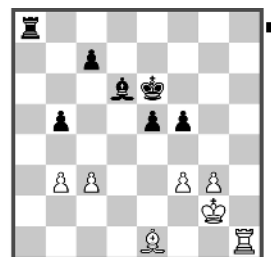
Strong and direct play by Alekhine.

31. ♖d2?!

Too passive.

A) 31. bxa4 bxa4 32. ♖b1 This is bad in view of 32... ♔d5.

B) 31. ♖h1 This was simply necessary. White must create some activity by seeking counterplay. 31... axb3 32. axb3 ♖a8 33. ♗e1



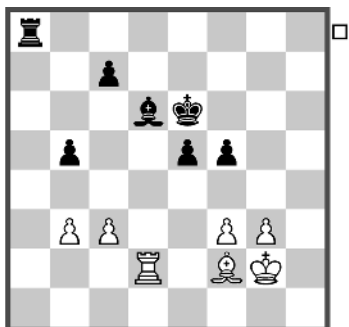
Position after: 33. ♗e1

33... ♖a2+ 34. ♔f1 This should hold. White would have counterplay against the f5-pawn.

31... axb3

With White's passive king driven far from the queenside, and with the black king active and well centralized together with the bishop, Black opens up a front on the queenside.

32. axb3 ♖a8



Position after: 32... ♖a8

33. c4?

This is already a direct mistake. White cannot achieve simplification without losing material.

33. ♔e1! ♖a3 34. ♖b2!?! This would have been a good defensive construction. Black dominates but there is nothing apparent.

33... ♖a3! 34. c5?

If White must play this, then it is clear that his "strategy" has failed.

A) 34. cxb5? ♖xb3+

B) 34. ♖b2 bxc4 35. bxc4 ♖c3



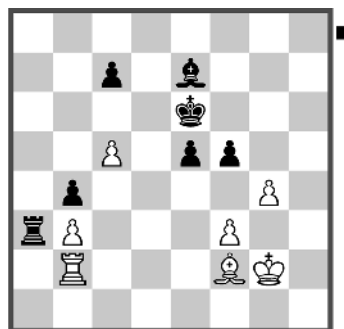
Position after: 35... ♖c3

This wins material but White would be able to fight for a draw in a rook end-game after the following. 36. c5 ♔xc5 37. ♔xc5 ♖xc5 38. ♖b8!

34... ♔e7 35. ♖b2 b4!

The pawn on c5 is separated and may fall soon.

36. g4



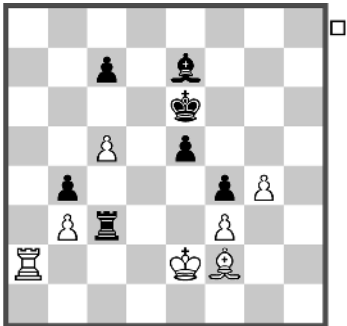
Position after: 36. g4

It is too late for this.

36... f4!

Not typical but the strongest response. This move cuts off the white king and bishop from play. Black in return has the possibility of ...e4 while the white passer at g4 is not dangerous at all.

37. ♔f1 ♖a1+ 38. ♔e2 ♖c1 39. ♖a2 ♖c3!



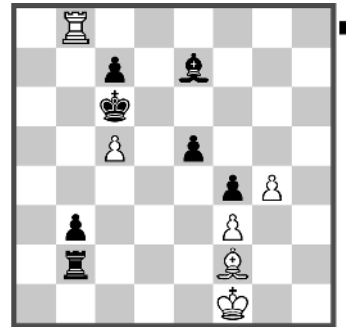
Position after: 39... ♖c3!

The pawn on b3 is the more important one. The pawn on c5 will fall anyway. It provides a shield for the black king for now.

40. ♖a7 ♔d7 41. ♖b7 ♖xb3 42. ♖b8 ♖b2+ 43. ♔f1 b3

Black converts with no particular problems.

44. ♔g1 ♔c6 45. ♔f1



Position after: 45. ♔f1

45... ♔d5

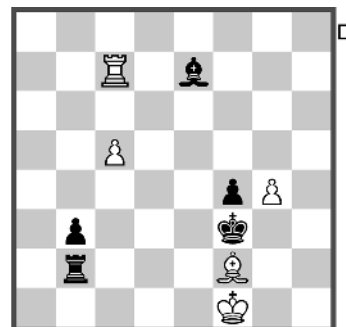
Again Alekhine prefers direct play – this time against the white king!

45... ♔xc5? This is less precise due to the following. 46. ♔xc5 ♔xc5 47. g5 There is no need to calculate the arising rook endgame.

46. ♖b7 e4 47. fxe4+

47. ♖xc7 ♔e6 48. fxe4 ♖c2→+

47... ♔xe4 48. ♖xc7 ♔f3



Position after: 48... ♔f3

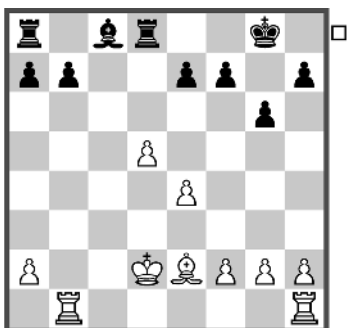
The quickest win.

49. ♖xe7 ♜xf2+ 50. ♔e1 b2 51. ♜b7
 ♜c2 52. c6 ♔g3 53. c7 f3 54. ♔d1
 ♜xc7 55. ♜xb2 f2

0-1

Game 2

♟ Kasparov, Garry (2595)
 ♚ Natsis, Trifon (2240)
 ♁ Valetta 1980



White is evidently better. The evaluation is clear from his better development, space advantage, active king and domination in the center.

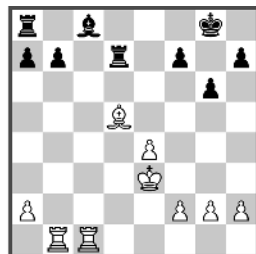
17. ♔e3

Kasparov naturally removes his king from the pin and makes it more active.

17... b6?!

Natural-looking, but very static and passive.

17... e6 This was practically a necessity.
 18. ♟c4 exd5 19. ♟xd5 ♜d7 20. ♜hc1



Position after: 20. ♜hc1

20... ♜e7 Now this would give Black chances to defend persistently.

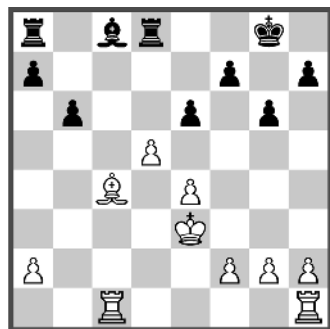
18. ♜bc1!?

Kasparov decides that the other rook belongs on d1. It is a matter of style.

18... e6

Now this is not so efficient. Black has lost a very important tempo.

19. ♟c4



Position after: 19. ♟c4

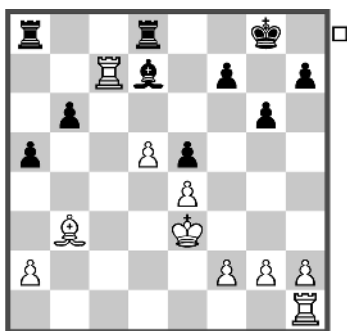
19... e5?

If Black must play this after he has already played ...e6, then everything is clear. Black's defensive strategy is bad – if one actually exists. No wonder Kasparov exploits it with great energy.

A) To be fair, it is difficult to give Black good advice. 19... exd5? 20. ♙xd5 ♖b8 21. ♖c7+–

B) 19... ♖b8!? 20. dxe6 ♙xe6 21. ♙xe6 fxe6 22. ♖c7 This is awful for Black.

20. ♙b3 ♙d7 21. ♖c7 a5



Position after: 21... a5

22. d6!

It is necessary to open the diagonal to attack f7 and to place the bishop on d5.

22. ♖hc1 This is less effective because of 22... a4! 23. ♙d1 b5.

22... b5 23. f4!

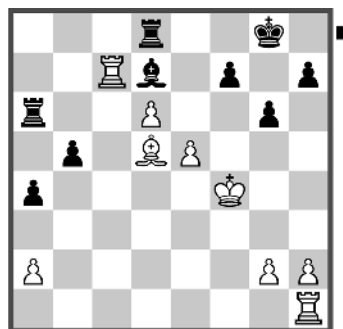
White chooses a good moment to attack on the opened f-file. Black's pieces

are stuck and cannot regroup to defend the f7-spot.

23... exf4+ 24. ♔xf4 ♖a6 25. e5

Of course. Picturesque. Take a look at White's centralized army and Black's disorganized troops.

25... a4 26. ♙d5

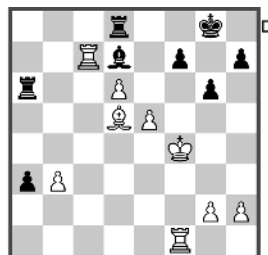


Position after: 26. ♙d5

26... a3

Black's advance on the queenside misses the mark. It is game over.

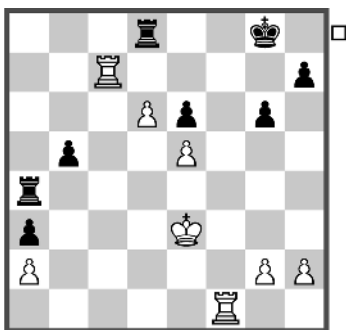
26... b4 27. ♖f1 b3 28. axb3 a3



Position after: 28... a3

This gives nothing. White would simply continue as follows. 29. ♔e3 a2 30. ♘xf7+ ♔g7 31. ♘e6 White has an easy win.

27. ♖f1 ♖a4+ 28. ♔e3 ♘e6 29. ♘xe6 fxe6



Position after: 29... fxe6

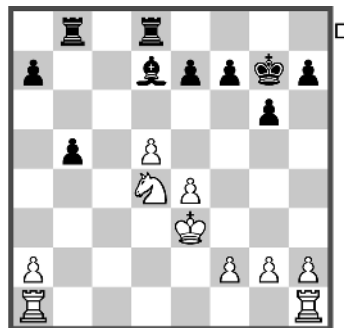
30. ♖ff7 ♖h4 31. ♖g7+ ♔h8 32. ♖ge7

1-0

Game 3

- ♟ Amos, Bruce M
- ♜ Martz, William E
- ♠ Mayaguez 1971

White is absolutely dominant, with full control over the center, his centralized king and the natural possibility to advance his pawns to constrict Black. Black's theoretically "better" majority is useless – furthermore, advancing the b-pawn has only weakened the c5- and c6-squares.



20. ♖hc1 ♖b6

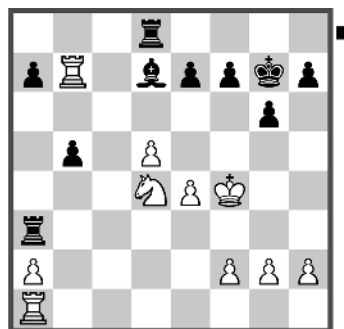
20... ♖dc8 21. ♘b3 White has full control after ♘c5 and ♔d4, with further doubling on the c-file and advancing the pawn phalanx in the center.

21. ♖c7 ♖a6 22. ♖b7?

An inaccuracy.

22. a3 This was needed to prevent the check on a3. Now 22... b4 fails to 23. ♘b3+.

22... ♖a3+ 23. ♔f4



Position after: 23. ♔f4

23... a6?

23... ♖a4! This would have kept the tension, delivering threats on the 4th rank with sufficient counterplay.

24. ♖c1!

White immediately takes his chance.

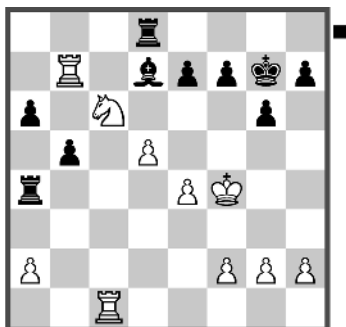
24... ♖a4

It is not the same to do it now.

24... ♖xa2? 25. ♖cc7+–

25. ♘c6?

This allows a nice tactical line. 25... g5 26. ♖g3 ♙c6, 27. dxc6 ♖c8 Nothing is clear.



Position after: 25. ♘c6

25. ♘b3 This is also good. 25... ♖xa2 26. ♖cc7 ♖xf2+ 27. ♖e3 ♖b2 28. ♘d4! White should win.

25... ♙xc6?

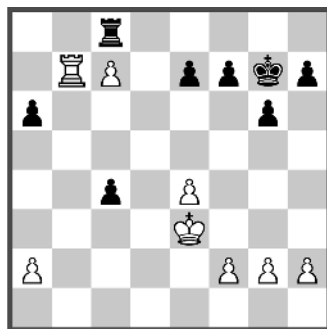
A fatal mistake.

25... g5+! 26. ♖g3 [26. ♖xg5? ♖xe4+; 26. ♖e3 ♖a3+ 27. ♖d4 ♙xc6 28. ♖xc6 ♖e8 This leads Black to safety.] 26... ♙xc6 27. dxc6 ♖c8 Black should not lose.

26. dxc6 ♖c8 27. c7 ♖c4

The only move to delay resignation.

28. ♖xc4 bxc4 29. ♖e3



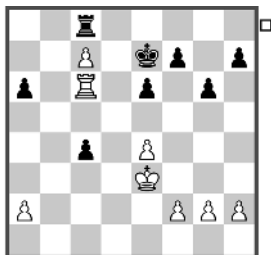
Position after: 29. ♖e3

Of course the c4-pawn is exposed. White wins without problem.

29... e5

Black prevents an immediate infiltration by the white king.

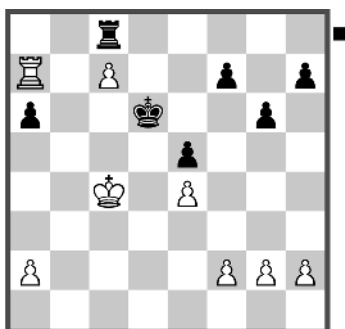
29... ♖f6 This would not help because of the following. 30. ♖b6+ [But not 30. ♖d4? ♖e6 31. ♖xc4 ♖d6 and Black can show long resistance.] 30... e6 31. ♖c6 ♖e7



Position after: 31... Ke7

32. Ke4 Kd7 33. Rxc4 White wins.

30. Kd2 Kf6 31. Kc3 Ke7 32. Kxc4
Kd6 33. Ra7



Position after: 33... Ra7

The game is over. No further comment is necessary.

33... Kc6 34. Ra6+ Kxc7 35. Kd5
Kd7 36. Ke5

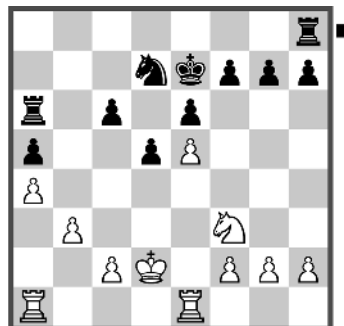
36. Ra7+ This would have been a finer win.

36... Rc2 37. Rf6 Ke7 38. a3 Rc5+
39. Kd4 Rg5 40. Rf3 Rxc2 41. a4
Rg5 42. Ra3 Kd6 43. a5 Kc7 44. a6

1-0

Game 4

♟ BioWaffen (2510)
♜ Zlatanovic, Boroljub (2407)
🌐 Playchess 2013



Black's advantage is undisputed. The evaluation is clear, with his better pawn structure, better prospects for the rooks and the possibility for pawn play on the queenside. Despite the fact that this was a friendly blitz internet game, Black was dedicated and focused on strategy. Alas, he went in too early to build the center.

17... f6?!

Premature.

17... c5 Evidently this was a better choice. Black would deliver the powerful threat of ...c4 (after ...Rc8). A crushing center with ...f6 can be on the agenda later.

18. exf6+ gxf6 19. Nd4

This is the point. Now whatever Black advances, the white knight would get a solid spot.

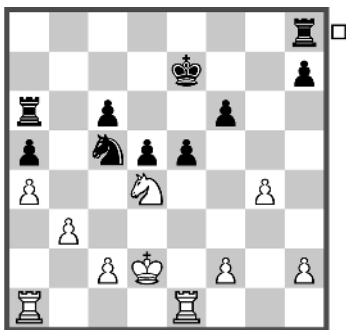
19... e5?!

19... c5 This would have been a better option. 20. ♖b5 ♜g8 Black keeps the advantage.

20. g4?

20. f4! ♜g8 [Alternatively 20... ♔f7 21. fxe5 fxe5 22. ♜f1+ with rich play would be okay for White.] 21. g3 h5 This should be preferable for Black, but with nothing apparent.

20... ♖c5?



Position after: 20... ♖c5?

Returning the favor.

20... h5! This would have given Black a huge initiative.

21. f3?!

21. ♖f5+! ♔e6 22. ♜ad1 ♜a7 This would have been a better option for White.

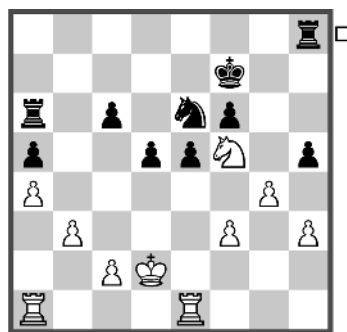
21... ♔f7 22. ♖f5

With excellent control of the center, it is possible and timely to act on the flanks.

22... h5

Again this crushing move secures Black a lasting initiative.

23. h3 ♖e6



Position after: 23... ♖e6

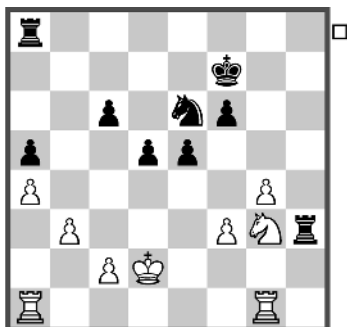
24. ♖g3?

24. ♜h1 This was necessary. White wanted somehow to force play. Of course it is unpleasant to wait for the opponent to open the file – however, having such an uncentralized army against one that is so centralized means it is important to play very carefully.

24... hxg4 25. hxg4 ♜h3

Black's rooks will invade via the h-file and the game is practically over.

26. ♖g1 ♜a8



Position after: 26... ♜a8

Another rook joins the attack on the h-file.

27. ♜af1 ♜ah8 28. ♞e2 ♜h2! 29. ♔e3 ♜8h3

Picturesque. White's pieces are stuck in the center without any action or tasks. At the same time Black's artillery triumphs on the flank – all this is a consequence of the strong control of the center.

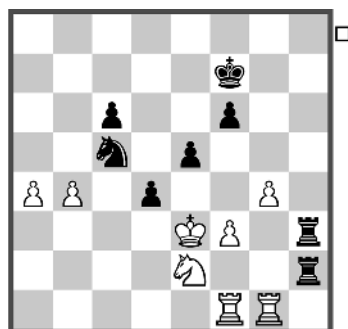
30. c3 ♞c5

Alternatively 30... c5 with the idea of ...d4 would have been even stronger.

31. b4

An act of desperation.

31... axb4 32. cxb4 d4+



Position after: 32... d4+

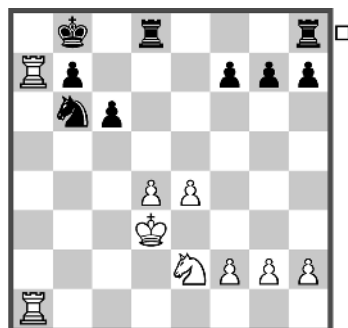
33. ♔d2 ♞xa4 34. ♔d3 ♞b2+ 35. ♔d2 d3

White resigned.

0-1

Game 5

♟ Kotov, Alexander
 ♚ Eliskases, Erich Gottlieb
 ♁ Saltsjobaden 1952



White has accumulated some advantages: gained space and active pieces after finishing development.

However most importantly there is control of the center. With his next move White follows the motto "he who controls the center may attack on the flank", at the same time preventing any possible attempt by Black to crush the center.

23. g4

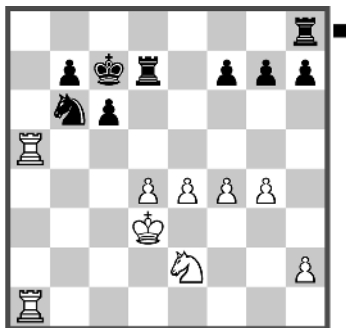
Preventing ...f5.

23... ♔c7

A) 23... h5 This would face the obvious 24. g5.

B) 23... g5 This cannot be an option because the knight may jump to the weakened squares f5 and h5.

24. f4 ♖d7 25. ♖7a5!



Position after: 25. ♖7a5!

An excellent decision. The rook has more to do on the 5th rank.

25... ♖hd8

Black does not have many options, but he has a stable position. In order to accumulate more pluses White decides to provoke some weaknesses on the king-side.

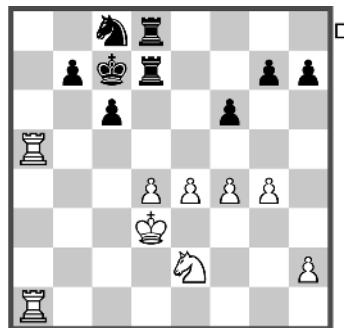
26. ♖g5

26. h4 This is a good move in the same direction but with an alternative implementation.

26... f6?!

26... g6 This looks somehow more flexible and logical.

27. ♖ga5 ♞c8



Position after: 27... ♞c8

28. f5

This was White's intention and the point of the rook's maneuver.

28... g5!

The knight must not come to f4.

29. h4

An instinctive reaction.

29... h6

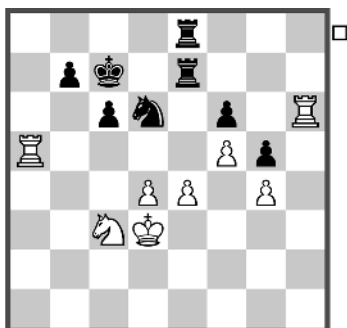
29... gxh4 30. ♖h1 This does not deserve any consideration by Black.

30. hxg5 hxg5 31. ♖h1 ♘d6 32. ♖h6 ♖e7

It may look as if Black has solid counterplay against the e4-pawn. However White has predicted the upcoming play.

33. ♘c3!

33. ♘g3 This is not as good because of 33... ♖ed7!.

33... ♖de8

Position after: 33... ♖de8

34. e5!

An excellent move. Only this move gives chances to play for a win.

34. ♖xf6 ♘xe4 35. ♘xe4 ♖xe4 This will soon lead to a clear draw.

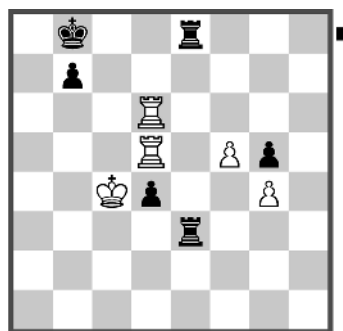
34... fxe5 35. ♘d5+?!

However this is already a dubious decision.

35. d5! This would have been a logical continuation. 35... e4+ 36. ♔e2 White would keep some chances.

35... cxd5 36. ♖c5+ ♔b8

36... ♔d7 37. ♖xd5 White would gain time taking the knight with check.

37. ♖xd6 exd4 38. ♖cxd5 ♖e3+ 39. ♔c4

Position after: 39. ♔c4

39. ♔xd4 This would give a clear draw after the following. 39... ♖8e4+ 40. ♔c5 ♖c3+

39... ♖c8+?

A mistake. 39... ♖3e4! Why not this?

40. ♔xd4 ♖g3?!

This simplifies White's task.

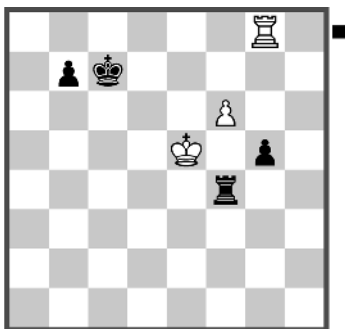
40... ♜e1 This would be met as follows.

41. f6 ♜f1 42. ♜e6!

41. f6 ♜xg4+ 42. ♔e5 ♜f4 43. ♜d8?

43. ♔e6! This is precise. 43... ♜e8+ 44. ♔f7 ♜e1 45. ♜xg5 White wins easily.

43... ♜xd8 44. ♜xd8+ ♔c7 45. ♜g8



Position after: 45. ♜g8

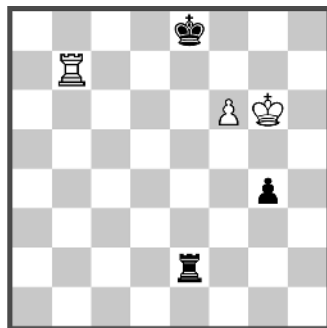
45... ♔d7?

Black errs at last and the game is over now.

45... ♜f1! 46. ♔e6 ♜e1+ 47. ♔f7 ♔d6 This would lead to a study draw.

46. ♜g7+ ♔e8 47. ♜xb7 ♜f2 48. ♔e6 ♜e2+ 49. ♔f5 g4 50. ♔g6!

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 50. ♔g6!

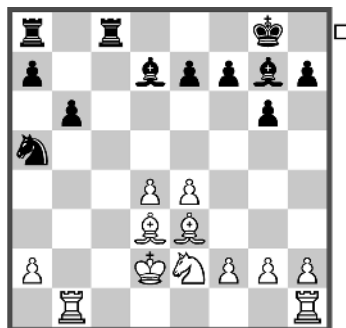
50... ♜f2 51. f7+ ♔f8 52. ♜b8+ ♔e7 53. ♜e8+

Black resigned.

1-0

Game 6

♗	Jussupow, Artur	(2665)
♜	Khalifman, Alexander	(2650)
♁	Ubeda 1997	



White is obviously better. His pawn center is very powerful and creates a perfect shield for his pieces and king.

Black does not have a well organized army at the moment.

16. ♖a6

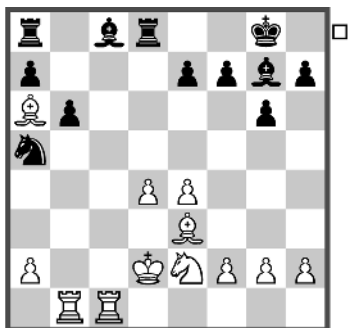
White gets control over the c8-square, fighting for the c-file.

16. ♖hc1 Another logical approach with the idea to directly switch to a minor piece endgame.

16... ♖d8

16... ♖c7 This would be worse. 17. ♖hc1 ♖xc1 18. ♖xc1 White keeps a clear plus after gaining a serious advantage.

17. ♖hc1 ♖c8



Position after: 17... ♖c8

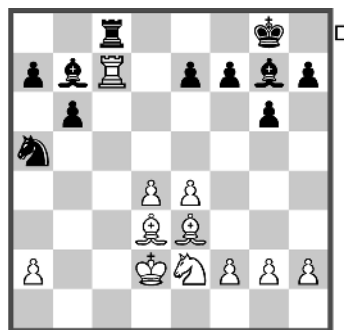
18. ♖d3

With an advantage in space and mobility, it is useful to keep the pieces on the board.

18... ♖b7 19. ♖c7 ♖ac8 20. ♖bc1

20. ♖xe7? ♖f8

20... ♖xc7 21. ♖xc7 ♖c8



Position after: 21... ♖c8

22. ♖xc8+

22. ♖xe7? ♖f8 23. ♖e5 [23. ♖d7? ♖b4+ 24. ♖d1 ♖c6→] 23... ♖b4+ 24. ♖d1 ♖c6∞

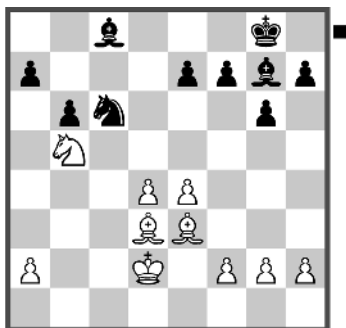
22... ♖xc8

The situation is defined. White has kept his bishops on the board but the rooks are gone. White has a stable advantage due to his better mobility and more space. All of this is due to the powerful pawn center. However White must take care with any further exchange of pieces – Black traditionally has the better majority. In this firm situation centralization and space would prevail over the majority.

23. ♖c3

Eyeing the b5- and d5-squares.

23... ♖c6 24. ♘b5



Position after: 24. ♘b5

White has the idea to provoke an advance of the black pawns which will make infiltration easier.

24... ♔a6 25. ♔c3 ♔f8?!

The king goes toward the center, although Black should have started with something more careful.

25... e6!? Another logical move. Black would try to prevent White's further expansion and reactivate his bishop via f8.

26. a4!

This pawn is safe here and liberates the bishop.

26... ♔b7

(see diagram next column)



Position after: 26... ♔b7

27. g4!?

A well-known approach from the previous game. White expands on the king-side according to the principle of playing on the side where he is stronger, at the same time preventing Black's crush with ...f5.

27... ♔e8 28. ♔c4

Better is 28... ♔c8 with the idea of targeting the white phalanx and reactivating the bishop.

28... ♖b8 29. ♔d3

Of course not 29. ♖xa7 ♔xe4.

29... a6

The knight is under attack. White has provoked ...a6 and now targets the b6-pawn.